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Culture of peace

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Seventieth year

Letter dated 6 February 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the letter, dated 29 January 2015, addressed to you by M. Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on attempts in parts of the world to spread Islamophobia (see annex I), together with the message, dated 21 January 2015, of Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, addressed to the youth in Europe and North America (see annex II).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 14, 66 and 107, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Hossein **Dehghani**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex I to the letter dated 6 February 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter dated 29 January 2015 from M. Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, addressed to the Secretary-General

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

I wish to draw your kind attention to the quite unsettling and pervasive manifestations of Islamophobia, which have further escalated in the aftermath of the recent terrorist acts in Paris. The unjustifiable killings by members of an infamous violent extremist group — whose raison d'être and emergence recently as a player in our region is known to all — have been condemned by Muslims across the globe, in clear and unequivocal terms, including by Governments, religious institutions and authorities, civil society and prominent individuals. The fact that such senseless resorts to violence have no place in Islam and its exalted teachings, nor are they acceptable to Muslims, is not in doubt; notwithstanding the campaign by the perpetrators and promoters of Islamophobia that tries to depict otherwise.

The issue for us, in the Islamic Republic, and in the larger Muslim world, is the prevalence of double standards when it comes to the question of the proclaimed defence of the universally respected principle of "freedom of expression". You might find it of interest that in 2008, a cartoonist from the same magazine was instructed by the magazine's editor to write a letter of apology for what was perceived to be anti-Semitic, and was summarily fired when he refused. No such approach or resolve has yet been seen in the case of frequent frivolous caricatures defaming Islam and desecrating Islamic values, which appeared in that magazine and other similar publications in Europe, leading to exacerbated tension with the Muslim community in France and the Islamic world. As we all have ruefully witnessed in recent times, in various societies in the Western world, whether by political quarters or personalities, the media or the virtual world, open assault on the religious values of Muslims, be it the person of the Prophet Mohammad, the Holy Qur'an or the Islamic teachings and values, has regrettably become the order of the day.

This inherently dangerous phenomenon poses a serious threat to international peace and security and to the acutely needed ambiance of humane, peaceful inter-State and inter-people relations and the requisite recourse, by all, to dialogue, understanding and tolerance between and among the plurality of ethnic, religious and racial communities in our world today.

Beyond the immediate and necessary action to denounce and condemn acts of verbal or physical violence, the West, and Europe in particular, now need to undertake a soul-searching exercise as to the underlying reasons why quite a sizeable number of individuals and groups espousing extremist ideologies and engaged in acts of brutal terror and heinous violence, in Europe and on a much bigger scale in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, happen to be mostly second-generation Europeans. This rather bizarre and seemingly inexplicable phenomenon cannot be a mere coincidence, nor can it be easily dismissed or pushed under the rug; it is part and parcel of the current European political landscape. It betrays signs

of a deeper sociopolitical malaise in the societies concerned, and especially in the policies in place as regards Muslim minorities and their values and sanctities.

Recent analyses, prompted in large measure by the high rate of terrorist recruitments in Europe and North America, point in the direction of a systematic failure of these societies, which has led to marginalization, alienation and disenfranchisement of these communities and their members, most notably the second generation, born, raised and educated in Western societies. It is bewildering, and equally frightening, that Da'esh terrorists, beheading innocent civilians and dangling with self-satisfying depravity the heads of the murdered hostages, just happen to be speaking European languages with a native accent. Pointing fingers of accusation towards others, whether Muslim countries, certain Governments whose policies and politics might be found disagreeable or, much worse, Islam as a faith, even if politically correct domestically and of instantaneous or short-term benefit, is simply unconvincing and incapable of addressing serious problems at the societal and now global levels.

In writing this letter, Mr. Secretary-General, I do not intend to lament obvious manifestations of double standards or find fault with highly sanctioned policies by this or that Western Government or society. Rather, I share this concern with you with a more serious objective in mind. Considering the institutional capabilities of the United Nations, and as a career multilateral diplomat who still believes in the substantial potentials of the Organization, I tend to remain hopeful that the United Nations and its capacity and mechanisms can be brought to bear on an issue of immense international impact and reverberation. Two Iranian proposals, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, "Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations" (resolution 56/6) and "A world against violence and violent extremism" (resolution 68/127), can provide an appropriate institutional framework for this endeavour. More recently, in a message that I have the privilege to enclose, Ayatollah Khamenei has taken the lead in initiating dialogue with youth in the West on this cardinal issue.

I strongly believe we urgently need to draw on our collective wisdom, at the level of the entire international community, to explore practical ways and means in this regard.

Looking forward to be advised of your resolute initiative, and underlining my readiness for further exchange of views on this topical issue, allow me, Mr. Secretary-General, to assure you of my highest consideration.

Annex II to the letter dated 6 February 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Message dated 21 January 2015 from Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, addressed to youth in Europe and North America

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

To the Youth in Europe and North America,

The recent events in France and similar ones in some other Western countries have convinced me to directly talk to you about them. I am addressing you (the youth) not because I overlook your parents, but rather because the future of your nations and countries will be in your hands, and I also find that the sense of quest for truth is more vigorous and attentive in your hearts.

I do not address your politicians and statesmen either in this message because I believe that they have consciously separated the route of politics from the path of righteousness and truth.

I would like to talk to you about Islam, particularly the image that is presented to you as Islam. Many attempts have been made over the past two decades, almost since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to place this great religion in the place of a horrifying enemy. The provocation of a feeling of horror and hatred and its utilization has unfortunately a long record in the political history of the West.

I don't want to deal herein with the different phobias with which the Western nations have thus far been indoctrinated. A cursory review of recent critical studies of history would bring home to you the fact that the Western Governments' insincere and hypocritical treatment of other nations and cultures has been censured in new historiographies.

The histories of the United States and Europe show that they are ashamed of slavery, embarrassed by the colonial period and chagrined at the oppression of people of colour and non-Christians. Your researchers and historians are deeply ashamed of the bloodshed wrought in the name of religion between the Catholics and Protestants or in the name of nationality and ethnicity during the First and Second World Wars. This approach is admirable.

By mentioning a fraction of this long list, I don't want to reproach history, rather I would like you to ask your intellectuals why the public conscience in the West awakens and comes to its senses only after a delay of several decades or centuries. Why should the revision of collective conscience apply to the distant past and not to the current problems? Why is it that attempts are made to inhibit public awareness regarding an important issue such as the treatment of Islamic culture and thought?

You know well that humiliation and spreading hatred and illusionary fear of the "other" have been the common base of all those oppressive profiteers. Now I would like you to ask yourself why the old policy of spreading "phobia" and hatred has targeted Islam and Muslims with an unprecedented intensity. Why does the power structure in the world want Islamic thought to be marginalized and remain latent? What concepts and values in Islam disturb the programmes of the super-Powers and

what interests are safeguarded in the shadow of distorting the image of Islam? Hence, my first request is: study and research the incentives behind this widespread tarnishing of the image of Islam.

My second request is: in reaction to the flood of prejudgements and disinformation campaigns, try to gain a direct and first-hand knowledge of this religion. The right logic requires that you understand the nature and essence of what they are frightening you about and want you to keep away from.

I don't insist that you accept my reading or any other reading of Islam. What I want to say is: don't allow this dynamic and effective reality in today's world to be introduced to you through resentments and prejudices. Don't allow them to hypocritically introduce their own recruited terrorists as representatives of Islam.

Receive knowledge of Islam from its primary and original sources. Gain information about Islam through the Qur'an and the life of its great Prophet. I would like to ask you whether you have directly read the Qur'an of the Muslims. Have you studied the teachings of the Prophet of Islam and his humane, ethical doctrines? Have you ever received the message of Islam from any sources other than the media?

Have you ever asked yourself how and on the basis of which values has Islam established the greatest scientific and intellectual civilization of the world and raised the most distinguished scientists and intellectuals throughout several centuries?

I would like you not to allow the derogatory and offensive manufactured images to create an emotional gulf between you and reality, taking away the possibility of an impartial judgement from you. Today, the communication media have removed the geographical borders. Hence, don't allow them to besiege you within fabricated mental borders.

Although no one can individually fill the gaps created, each one of you can construct a bridge of thought and fairness over the gaps to illuminate yourself and your surrounding environment. While this preplanned challenge between Islam and you, the youth, is undesirable, it can raise new questions in your curious and inquiring minds. Attempts to find answers to these questions will provide you with an appropriate opportunity to discover new truths.

Therefore, don't miss the opportunity to gain a proper, correct and unbiased understanding of Islam so that, hopefully, due to your sense of responsibility towards the truth, future generations may write the history of this current interaction between Islam and the West with a clearer conscience and less resentment.